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Barge Study Report Released

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and the American Waterways Operators (AWO), the national association for the tugboat, towboat, and barge industry, partnered to conduct a study of barge traffic on the Mississippi River and the possible effects on air quality. Today the results of the Carville Barge Monitoring Project, a five-month long study, were released.

The Baton Rouge area is currently classified as moderate nonattainment for the pollutant ozone. The goal of the study was to determine what, if any, impact barge traffic has on air quality. DEQ would use this data to enhance its air modeling and determine if barge emissions were impacting the monitor. It was determined that the air monitor at DEQ's Carville site would be the best location from which to base the study. An air sampler at the monitoring location automatically took air samples for real-time speciation analysis when volatile organic compounds (VOCs) reached a predetermined level in the air. AWO gathered vessel traffic information regarding barge positions on the Mississippi River and information in regard to barge owners and cargoes when the Carville monitor was triggered. The primary purpose of the project was to determine if marine traffic contributed to elevated levels of VOC in the air around the Carville site.

The focus of the project was to develop a set of emissions profiles and identify the chemical compounds present in the Carville area. This information was compared to the barge traffic and meteorological data and then used to determine whether any of the profiles could be attributed to sources on the river. A total of 76 triggered samples were collected in the study, which ran during ozone season (May 1 to Sept. 30).

It was concluded that approximately five percent of triggered samples could be attributed to barge, ship, or other river sources. The small number of triggered samples is consistent with past DEQ observations at the Carville site. While this study does not directly correlate tank barge emissions to ozone exceedance days, it may be prudent to continue studying potential sources of ozone precursors at the Carville monitor and in the Baton Rouge area to better understand the true cause ozone exceedances.

"This project is an example of DEQ and private industry working together to solve problems," said DEQ Assistant Secretary Paul Miller. "The American Waterways Operators used its technology and expertise to help quantify emissions from river traffic, which has been suspected of contributing to the ozone problems in the Baton Rouge area. Louisiana has seen its air quality improve immensely over the years. Working together as a team with organizations like the American Waterways Operators helps the state find solutions."

The entire report is available at www.deq.la.gov.

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